

MARYLAND PRISONERS' RIGHTS COALITION

TESTIMONY – SUPPORT
HB0102/SB0194 - **Labor, Job Training, and Educational Course**
FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chair Kelly, Vice Chair Feldman and Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our **SUPPORT** for SB0194/HB0102.

As you are all aware, inmates back approximately 1.20 a day. This rate applies to a majority of the positions throughout the DOC.

Maryland has not increased wages for these inmates in 30 years and yet their expenses have increased tremendously. Inmates must pay for stamps, paper, envelopes and just basic hygiene products as well as supplementary meals from commissary. Their work conditions are not ideal and are laborious, akin to slave labor. SB0194/HB0102 strives to rectify this problematic conduct.

Studies have found that prisoners who gain professional skills while incarcerated are far less likely to commit crimes, like theft, both behind bars and after release. Paying prisoners' a decent wage also increases the opportunity for inmates to afford the items necessary to survive, practice hygienic and reduce the burdens on already struggling family members to provide financial reprieve for these men and women.

Additionally, prisoners supply the state with everything from farm goods to furniture to license plates, creating an avenue to further exploit their labor and significantly less than minimum wage that a member of the community would earn. We must disincentive big business to influence mass incarceration, whereby they can abuse these types of laborers by continuing to exploit them.

By not allowing any meaningful wage Maryland would assure that human beings, who are serving their time are not further exploited and that we do not continue to facilitate blatant exploitation of our fellow states' men and women.

For these reasons, we urge this committee to **pass SB0194/HB0102** and send a clear message that slavery has ended!